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ABSTRACT

This paper reports the replies given by secondary school teachers and supervisors on a survey asking for their views on (1) the comparative merits of the descriptive materials for the College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) and the Advanced Placement Program (APP), and (2) the manner by which the two testing programs are now made available to high school students. Twenty-three supervisors and 309 teachers throughout Florida completed the survey. Their responses are reported in terms of frequency counts and percentages of responses to alternative positions. Results are discussed in terms of evaluation of (1) CLEP descriptive brochures and APP study outlines, and (2) the views of respondents toward testing and awarding of credit. (DT)

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Credit-by-Examination As Seen by
Secondary School Teachers and Coordinators of Accountability
in Florida¹

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Secondary school teachers and coordinators of accountability (also called supervisors) in Florida have overwhelmingly endorsed testing programs for high school students that lead to college-level credit. Four out of every five teachers and coordinators of accountability sampled in a statewide survey conducted in Florida in the fall of 1975 expressed agreement with the following statement:

In your judgment, programs of testing that allow high school seniors to receive credit in college-level subjects by attaining a specified score on the examinations implement an educationally sound concept.

When queried about such matters as a cutoff score, the role of teachers in assisting students prepare for the tests, and at what grade level students should be encouraged to take the tests leading to college credit, the teachers and supervisors exhibited less consensus than they showed in their response to the basic question whether or not credit-by-examination was based on a sound educational concept. This paper reports the replies of the survey participants to the full range of questions in the survey, including items that enabled teachers and

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supervisors to make a comparative evaluation of descriptive brochures for the College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) and course descriptions for the Advanced Placement Program (APP).

In Florida, colleges and universities award up to 45 quarter hours of credit to students who attain a prescribed cutoff score on the CLEP General Examinations. Although credit is also given on the basis of performance on the CLEP Subject Examinations, students favor the CLEP General Examinations over both the CLEP Subject Examinations and the APP tests. During the year September 1, 1974, through August 31, 1975, more than 7,500 students presented CLEP scores (most of which were from the General Examinations) to the nine public universities in Florida, and were awarded a total of 125,007 quarter hours of credit. In the same year, 534 students sent Advanced Placement scores to the same nine universities resulting in the award of 2,450 hours of credit. The total number of Florida participants in the two credit-by-examination programs was, of course, much larger than the number of students who sent their scores to the public universities.

The imbalance between the CLEP and APP testing programs has become a matter of concern to high school teachers and college faculty members alike. Seemingly, the most appropriate point of entry for educators to look into the comparative status of the rapidly growing CLEP testing program and the somewhat stabilized Advance Placement Program was to survey the outlooks held by secondary school teachers toward the two credit-by-examination programs.

Considerable research effort is being focused on credit-by-examination in Florida, but these studies deal mainly with the CLEP. Currently, a five-year study is being carried forward by a task force made up of researchers from the community colleges and public universities in

Florida that is examining the relationship between successful performance on the CLEP and student classroom achievement. In an earlier study, Losak and Lin (1973) reported that students who earned CLEP credit made faster progress in college than students of similar academic potential who did not earn CLEP credit, and without showing any drop in academic achievement. Tully (1974) associated CLEP General Examinations scores earned by mid-year college freshmen with their grades in introductory college courses. His results generally supported the present cutoff (50th Xile, college sophomore norms) used to award college credit.

Caldwell (1976) looked at the sophomore-level course choices of students who had earned 36 or more quarter hours of credit. He found that successful performance on the CLEP General Examinations did not deter students from registering for sophomore courses in General Education, and that the overall grade point average of the "credit-earned" group was higher than the GPA of a control group.

The collective results of the above studies contribute some measure of support to credit-by-examination policies followed by colleges and universities. The process by which students earn college credit-by-examination, however, is rooted in the secondary school years and involves the APP as well as the CLEP. The survey of high school teachers and supervisors in Florida was undertaken to enable secondary school instructional personnel to give their estimates of the two leading credit-by-examination programs as they are now being offered and should be offered.

The Survey Project

The survey offered secondary school teachers and coordinators of accountability in Florida's 67 counties an initial opportunity to share their specific views of (a) the comparative merits of the descriptive

materials for the CLEP and the APP and (b) the manner by which the two testing programs are now made available to high school students.

The coordinator of accountability in each county was sent four questionnaires. Questionnaire I contained items relating to the quality and appropriateness of the descriptive brochure for the CLEP General Examinations; Questionnaire II consisted of similar items relating to the CLEP Subject Examinations; and Questionnaire III was made up of items dealing with the Advanced Placement Program. Questionnaire IV had items that elicited agreement or disagreement on the part of the respondents to the concept of credit-by-examination, the cutoff score used to award credit, the role of the teacher in advising students to prepare to take tests leading to college credit, and student choice of one testing program over the other.

Counties with three or more percent of the total number of secondary school teachers in Florida were designated as "large" counties for purposes of this study. There were ten counties in this category. The remaining 57 counties were designated as "small" counties.

Coordinators of accountability in the ten large counties were given the option of establishing either one or two review committees, each committee to be made up of five teachers. Coordinators of accountability in the small counties were asked to appoint only one review committee. A review committee consisted of a teacher in English, a teacher in mathematics, in social studies or history, in a physical science, and in either art, art history or any other subject area in the humanities.

Coordinators of accountability were asked to distribute the four study questionnaires, the CLEP descriptive brochures, and the APP course

descriptions to the review committee members.¹ After four weeks, the coordinators were asked to collect the completed questionnaires and return them to the project director. Coordinators were invited, but not required, to complete a set of questionnaires themselves.

The sequence in which the questionnaires were to be completed was as follows: the one dealing with the CLEP General Examinations was to be completed first, the CLEP Subject Examinations second, and the APP questionnaire third. Questionnaire IV, an opinionnaire which requested the teachers to respond to items relating to the way in which the two testing programs are offered and procedures for awarding credit, was to be completed last. This sequence was designed to insure that all participants who systematically reviewed the descriptive brochures and course descriptions became familiar with the nature of the CLEP and the APP programs before responding to the opinionnaire.

Teachers and supervisors who attended the seminars held by CEEB in Florida during the fall of 1975 were asked to indicate this attendance on Questionnaire IV. Fourteen of the 332 participants in the study reported that they attended the CEEB seminars.

Eighty-six completed sets of questionnaires were returned from the ten large counties and 246 completed sets were sent in from 45 small counties that participated. Altogether, 55 of Florida's 67 counties, or 82%, were represented in the study. Six of the ten large counties appointed two review committees and each of the remaining four large counties appointed one review committee. The total number of sets of questionnaires distributed (not counting sets sent to the 67 supervisors, whose

¹The College Board supported the study by making available without cost approximately 400 CLEP brochures and a similar number of sets of APP course descriptions which were sent to the teachers and coordinators participating in the study.

participation was optional) was 365. The number of completed sets of questionnaires returned by the teachers on the review committees was 309, or 85% of the sets of questionnaires distributed. Twenty-three additional sets of questionnaires were returned by the supervisors.

Data Analysis

Frequency counts and percentages of the responses to alternative response positions for each item were computed. The data were coded in a manner to make possible a comparative analysis of the frequencies with which various sub-groups of participants responded to the items. Among these comparative analyses were: supervisors vs teachers, seminar participants vs non-participants, and teachers from "small" counties vs teachers from "large" counties.

The response patterns of the several sub-groups were strikingly similar, and to present the details of these sub-group comparisons would serve no useful purpose. Instead, the results set forth will be confined to an analysis of the responses of the total group of participants (n=332) to the items of the four survey questionnaires.

Results

Evaluation of CLEP Descriptive Brochures and APP Study Outlines

More than 80% of the respondents expressed agreement that College Board descriptive brochures for the CLEP General Examinations, Subject Examinations, and Advanced Placement Program course outlines:

- (a) adequately define the areas covered by the tests;
- (b) provide sample questions that give a good indication of the general nature of the tests and indicate the level of the subject material;
- (c) identify the cognitive skills required to take the tests; and,
- (d) contain test directions that are concise, explicit, and easily understood.

The percentages of respondents agreeing that the content of the five tests making up the General Examinations was appropriate to measure knowledge of introductory courses in college (Table 1) were of a lesser magnitude than the percentages expressing agreement concerning sample directions and test directions. While there was relatively little disagreement on the issue of coverage of course content by the tests, there were, however, substantial percentages of respondents who had "no opinion" on the matter.

The percentages in Table 1 of respondents having "no opinion" on how well the content of the General Examinations related to the content of introductory college courses ranged from 29% to 41%; "no opinion" percentages for the Subject Examinations ranged from 37% to 49%. In contrast, respondents had far less difficulty in equating the content of the APP tests with college courses. When asked if the content of the APP tests as set forth in the course descriptions was appropriate for college-level courses, 93% of the respondents expressed agreement, 4% indicated disagreement, and only 3% marked "no opinion."

Overall, 91% of the respondents felt that the CLEP descriptive booklets would assist the student in deciding if he should register for the General Examinations. The percentage of agreement with respect to a student's use of the Subject Examinations descriptive material to guide him in selecting a test program was 88%, and for the APP was 90%.

In the view of many respondents, descriptive brochures and course outlines that were useful in guiding the student toward the testing program most suitable for him to enter will not serve the purpose of preparing the student to take the tests. When asked if the CLEP brochures and APP study outlines were sufficient to help the student prepare for the tests, the "disagree" responses were substantial: 50% for the CLEP General

Table 1

Responses of Teachers and Supervisors
to the Appropriateness of Test Content
to Introductory College Courses

Item Statement	Agree %	No Opinion %	Disagree %
<u>General Examinations</u>			
The content of the English Composition Test appears to be appropriate for an introductory college course in English Composition.	63	29	8
The content of the Humanities Test appears to be appropriate for introductory college courses in Humanities.	61	32	7
The content of the Mathematics Test appears to be appropriate for introductory college courses in Mathematics.	56	37	6
The content of the Natural Sciences Test appears to be appropriate for introductory college courses in Natural Sciences.	55	41	4
The content of the Social Sciences/History Test appears to be appropriate for introductory college courses in Social Sciences/History.	61	35	4
<u>Subject Examinations</u>			
The content of the Subject Examination in English Composition appears to be appropriate for an introductory college level course in English Composition.	54	37	9
The content of the three Subject Examinations in Literature appears to be generally appropriate for introductory college courses in Literature.	47	45	8
The content of the Subject Examinations in College Algebra - Trigonometry, Trigonometry, and College Algebra appears to be generally appropriate for introductory college courses in these subjects.	53	43	4
The content of the Biology, General Chemistry, and Geology Subject Examinations appears to be generally appropriate for introductory college courses in these subjects.	46	49	5
The content of the American Government, American History, Sociology, and Western Civilization Subject Examinations appears to be generally appropriate for introductory college courses in these subjects.	52	44	4

Examinations, 46% for the CLEP Subject Examinations, and 46% for the Advanced Placement.

Views of Respondents Toward Testing and Award of Credit

As stated in the introduction, 80% of the respondents expressed agreement with the statement that "credit-by-examination implemented an educationally sound concept." Also, an equally high percentage of the respondents said that teachers should encourage students to prepare for credit-by-examination. In the opinion of 42% of the respondents, this encouragement should be given at grades 10-12; 27% believed that only juniors and seniors should be encouraged, and another 18% would limit the encouragement to seniors. Thirteen percent of the respondents had no opinion or did not respond to this item.

As the credit-by-examination movement has gained momentum, some teachers and counselors have expressed the opinion that a high school student can have the best of two worlds by using the APP study outlines to prepare for being tested, but to register for the CLEP General Examinations instead of the Advanced Placement tests. A student could thereby pay less money in test fees, spend less time in being tested, and yet stand a chance of earning more credit. Teachers who participated in this survey, however, voiced no clear-cut consensus on the issue. When asked if APP study guides should be used to prepare for the CLEP, only 7% favored such a strategy, 38% was opposed, and 55% marked "no opinion".

Only one respondent in five thought that a student earning credit-by-examination should skip his senior year to enter college. A much larger percentage of respondents (one out of every two) would permit the high school student who earned college credit to take courses on a near-by college campus, but would expect such a student to complete high school.

Fifty-five percent of the respondents reported that the cutoff for college credit (50th %ile, college sophomore norms) was about right, 34% believed that the cutoff was too low, 2% felt that it was too high, and 9% had no opinion or made no response. With respect to the amount of credit earned by the CLEP General Examinations, 57% said the amount was about right, 1% said not enough credit was earned, and 27% thought too much credit was earned. The remaining 15% had no opinion or made no response.

The respondents did not approve of the prevailing set of circumstances in many schools that places the responsibility for obtaining study materials for the CLEP on the students. Responses to a question relating to making study materials available to the student were as follows:

Question: Which one of the following best represents your position concerning study materials?

Publishers of the CLEP test should provide study materials for purchase by interested students.	35.5%
Publishers of the CLEP tests should supply teachers with guidelines for assembling study materials, the guidelines to be provided to interested teachers at no cost.	41.6%
Students should be expected to identify and obtain their own study materials.	14.2%
No opinion or gave a written response	8.7%

Forty-seven percent of the respondents stated that the APP, which is linked to a preparatory program of study, had more of an appeal to them than a testing program (such as the CLEP) that is not tied in to a preparatory study program. Twenty-one percent said that a study program did not add to the appeal of a testing program, and 32% expressed uncertainty or made no response.

Despite the preference of nearly 50% of the teachers for the APP, 61% of the survey participants said "no" when asked if teachers

should steer students from one program to another. Twelve percent said "yes", and 27% had no opinion on the issue--or failed to respond.

The greater frequency with which the CLEP is administered was, in the opinion of the respondents, a significant factor in the choice of many students of the CLEP over the APP. One out of every two respondents said "yes" to this question, as compared to one out of every four respondents who said "no".

Even though the respondents expressed the opinion that the frequency with which the CLEP was given during the year drew students away from the APP, frequent opportunities available to students to take the CLEP was not the main reason cited for its popularity over the APP. The reason cited with greatest frequency for student preference of the CLEP was that the CLEP tests are easier than the APP tests.

Discussion

Significant areas of consensus among secondary school teachers and coordinators of accountability identified in this study are summarized as follows:

...strong endorsement of the concept of credit-by-examination. Only one out of every two persons surveyed, however, expressed satisfaction with the way opportunities are now being offered to high school students to earn credit-by-examination.

.....CLEP brochures and APP course outlines are regarded as publications of high quality and of use to students in deciding whether to seek college credit via the CLEP or APP. These publications alone, however, do not constitute sufficient study material to aid the student in preparing for the examinations.

.....credit-by-examination contributes positively to classroom instruction in high school by serving as a strong motivating force to the student to do well in his studies. Teachers believe that they should encourage students to prepare for the examinations leading to credit...teachers see no pronounced signs that students are putting an over-emphasis on passing tests.

.....high school students, beginning with grade 10, should be informed of credit-by-examination...there was no significant support,

however, for students earning credit-by-examination to leave high school before graduation except perhaps to enroll in classes on a nearby college campus while completing high school.

.....the publishers of CLEP should do more than they are doing to provide CLEP study materials to high school students planning to take the examinations. The publishers should either offer study materials to students for purchase by the students or provide teachers with guidelines at no cost for use by teachers in helping students to assemble study materials.

.....there should be no relationship between classroom instruction and preparing students for credit-by-examinations except for the teacher to cite periodically the opportunities for earning college-level credit.

.....teachers like the APP because it offers a preparatory program for the examinations...teachers, however, do not see themselves as having the role of steering students toward the APP and away from the CLEP.

As one reviews the above areas of consensus, he gets the impression that the full potential of credit-by-examination is not being realized despite the popularity of the CLEP General Examinations. He becomes aware that the CLEP and the APP are in a sense vying for students. With teacher guidance in the choice of a testing program being withheld, students, for practical reasons, are choosing the CLEP. This may be a wrong choice for the student fortunate enough to have the academic potential to be challenged by college-level study while still in high school.

As reported in the Results Section of this report, teachers and coordinators of accountability had difficulty in equating the content of CLEP tests, as described in the brochure, with the content of introductory classes taught in college. On the other hand, these respondents experienced no difficulty in equating the content of the APP examinations, as presented in the course descriptions, with the content of college-level courses. This finding as it relates to the CLEP General Examinations is not surprising in that the General Examinations were designed to be broad measures in general education.

The lack of consensus among the respondents that the content of the Subject Examinations, as described in the CLEP brochure, appeared appropriate for college-level courses, needs further study. Possibly, the relatively greater detail set forth in the APP course descriptions concerning course content as compared to the brief statements in the CLEP brochure dealing with content coverage may have led to an inconclusive reaction on the part of the respondents to the CLEP Subject Examinations and a favorable reaction to the APP materials.

The preference of the respondents for the APP because of its supporting program of study and preparation, and the ability of the respondents to equate the content of the APP tests with the content of college-level courses have not had any pronounced impact on bringing about an expansion of the APP program. If large numbers of teachers are reluctant to recommend the APP over the CLEP, quite understandably students have no way of knowing that their teachers generally prefer one testing program over the other, and why their teachers have developed this preference.

Teacher neutrality on political and religious issues may well be defended. Neutrality on the matter of recommending one testing program over another, especially when one testing program may be better suited to an academically talented student in need of a course of study commensurate to his abilities, is misplaced objectivity and cannot be defended.

Neither teachers nor students, according to the respondents, are aware of the flexibility that can be exercised in arranging for APP instruction for students in grades 11 and 12. Also, teachers and students are not generally aware that student success on three or more APP tests can result in the student's being placed at the sophomore year in college.

Lack of knowledge on the part of teachers and students about these two meritorious features of the APP undoubtedly curtails student choice of the APP as a means for earning college-level credit.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The imbalance between the CLEP and APP programs of credit-by-examination should not continue. The APP, designed to prepare high school students to attain competency in college-level subjects, is often bypassed by students in favor of the CLEP, which offers no program of study and preparation. Secondary school students of high academic potential who do not participate in the Advanced Placement Program miss an opportunity to begin college-level study while still in high school.

Corrective action lies in the hands of the College Board as well as in the hands of secondary school teachers. College Board should speed up its declared intention to merge the two testing programs. Pending this development, high school teachers should abandon their stance of neutrality, and without hesitation, urge the talented student to accept the challenge offered by the APP to step-up his intellectual development over and beyond the pace established by many high schools for students generally.

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